ORIGINAL ARTICLES

A Study on Stress and Work Family Conflict among Married Women in Their Families

A.M. Sultana, Md. Firoz Alam

1Department of Social Studies and Citizenship, Faculty of Human Sciences, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia
2Department of Social Work, Chandaria Degree College, Pirganj, Thakurgaon, Bangladesh.

ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, the participation of women in the labour force has been increased since its independence in 1957. Although women’s increased involvements in employment help them to contribute to the family income, most of working women are facing challenges in balancing between work and family that might lead to stress and work family conflict. Stress and work family conflict is a common problem faced by majority of employees especially working mothers with young children. Work-family conflicts are stresses that are severe factors that lead to various negative outcomes to the well-being of the family. The article, therefore, attempts to examine working and non-working women’s perception on stress and work family conflict in their family. The article also examines the influence of stress on work family conflict among working women in their family. The results showed that most of working mothers encountered a number of difficulties in balancing between family and job responsibility. They are facing stress related to social visits, personal affairs, feeling fatigue and children sickness compared to non-working mothers. It has been noted that impact of multiple roles at work and in family life contribute to work family conflict. Most of working women are having stress related to heavy workload and time constraints that might lead to work family conflict. Finally, the article conclude that although working women are having extreme stress and to juggle their jobs and their home life, they made the arrangement among family members to follow discipline that help them to manage family as well as job responsibility.

Key words: Work-family conflicts, stress, Gender ideology, Traditional ideology, Labour force participation.

Introduction

This study focuses the issue of stress and work family conflict among working women in their family. Work-family conflict refers to the extent to which work- and family-related responsibilities interfere with each other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). It is a conflict of work and family interrelated roles. Work family conflict occurs when contribution in work role creates problems in contribution of family role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). It is also documented that work-family conflict could arise from tough time demands, stress originated in one role spillover to other role disturbing the quality of life, and behaviors that were appropriate in one domain but are considered as inappropriate in other domain. When demands from family and work are equally mismatched, it led to work-family conflict (Bruke P J, 1986; Gary, 1991). Work and family are the two most important aspects in working mother’s life. Work-family conflict started in the 1980s, and it has expanded rapidly with women increased participation in the labour force.

Currently, work family conflict is a common problem faced by majority of employees especially working mothers with young children. Work-family conflict can be classified as time-based, strain-based or behavior based (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). According to previous studies (Byron, 2005, Judge, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1994) time-based conflict occurs when job and family responsibilities compete for the individual’s time. It is a condition related to long work hours, schedule inflexibility, shift work requirements, and overtime/evening duties that might conflict with family responsibility. Kahn & Byosiere, (1992) suggest that strain-based conflict experienced in one role crosses-over and interferes with participation in another role. For example, the stress of tending to a sick child affects one’s ability to concentrate at work. Conversely, behavior-based conflict occurs when specific behaviors required in one role are incompatible with behavioral expectations in another role. In a study Lambert, Hogan, Camp, & Ventura (2006) stated that behavior-based conflict was related to work stress and job satisfaction. These are commonly viewed factors that lead work family among married working women. According to Nicole (2003) work family conflict arises from work and family related factors. He emphasized on work related factors such as working shifts, sudden transfer, frequent overtime, and working hour changes that increase conflict risk. A study was conducted by Schieman et al., (2003) in Toronto, Canada. The authors noted...
that work family conflict was positively associated with anxiety and depression among employed women. It also
revealed that conflict and distress were strongly associated among women with routine jobs.

Similarly in Malaysia, women participation in the labour is increasing that might lead to family work
conflict. The findings from the first Malaysian Family Life Survey (MFLS-1) and fourth Malaysian Population
and Family Survey (MPFS-4) conducted by the National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB)
showed that between 1978 to 2004, there has been a significant increase in a proportion of working women in
formal sectors such as professional, technical, clerical and sales workers. Aminah (1995) noted that in Malaysia
time committed to work contributes to conflict between employees’ work and family roles. In another study was
conducted by Aminah (1997) found that in Malaysia work-family conflict are increasing due to lower job
satisfaction as well as life satisfaction. Another aspect of work family conflict is gender role ideology. Family
gender ideology has an influence on work family conflict. Previous literature has identified job and family role
qualities to be important factors of decreased psychological distress (Barnett, Marshall, Raudenbush, &
Brennan, 1993). The article examines both working women stress that might lead work family conflict in their
families. The article argued that most working women are facing stress for not spending enough time with their
children and family; whereas a very less percentage of non-working mothers may feel stress for the similar
reason. Thus, it is important to investigate both working and non-working women perceptions on their stress
that might lead work family conflict.

Objectives and Research Design:

The objectives of this article are (1) to examine working and non-working women’s perception on stress
and work family conflict in their family; (2) to determine the influence of stress on work family conflict
among-working women in their family and (3) to determine the steps followed by working women in balancing
between work and family. The article uses structured survey data from the selected study areas. The findings
presented in this study are based on survey research in two universities and two residential areas in Malaysia. A
total of 140 married women (working 70 and 70 non-working women) were interviewed. In this article, a Likert
scale has been used to examine working and non-working women perception on their stress and work family
conflict. The variables were measured using 10 items on a four point Likert format. In this format the responses
were carried out in terms of disagree, strongly disagree, either agree or disagree, agree and strongly agree are
presented the values of 1-5 respectively. In response to each of the items, respondents made their ratings on a
five point scale, pointing whether they (1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neither agree or disagree (4) agree
and (5) strongly agree.

Results and Discussions

Stress: working and non-working women:

Stress is one kind of physiological reaction among working women that might occurs when they face an
imbalance between work and family. The article stress that faced by working and non-working women in their
family. Results presented in Table 1 revealed that about (10.0 & 28.6 % agree & strongly agree) working
women are facing stress for not spending enough time with their children and family, whereas a very less
percentage of non-working women are feeling stress for the similar reason.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>WORKING WOMEN</th>
<th>NON-WORKING WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=70</td>
<td>N=70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) I feel stress for my children for not spending enough time with them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I feel stress when I spend my time on individual leisure such as exercising, facial treatment etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) I feel stress as I do not have a good communication with my neighbor and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
friends

I feel stress as I could not spend enough time for my children and family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Working Mother</th>
<th>Non-Working Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second statement, it was noted that working women’s stress (28.6 & 10 percent agree and strongly agree) on personal affairs higher than non-working women (12 & 7.1% agree and strongly agree). However, the results revealed that majority of working women (22.9 & 41.6 %) are having stress because of their incapability of social visit where as a small numbers of non-working women (5.7 & 2.9 percent) are feeling stress for the same reasons. In the fourth statement, it was found that working women’s stress (25.7& 7.1 %agree and strongly agree) for not spending enough time with children and family is slightly higher than non-working women (17.1 & 10 % agree and strongly agree).

By examining the above mentioned statements it can be summarized that working women’s stress are higher than non-working women. Majority of working women are in stressed because of their incapability to make personal relation, limited social visit and not having quality time for children and family. In a study Crosby (1991) also stated that women who occupy multiple roles are less depressed than other women.

The influence of stress on work family conflict:

The article also examines the influence of stress on work family conflict among working and non-working women in their family. In Malaysia, the work family conflict are becoming a serious issue needs to be investigated. Currently, many women are entering in to the labour force. Women increased participation in the labour force influence them to play multiple roles in balancing work, housework, and child-care responsibilities. On the other hand, the impact of multiple roles at work and in family life may contribute to work family conflict. A total of five statements are constructed to measure the factors that lead stress and work family conflict. The results presented in Table 2. In the first statement “I always feel stress and quarrel with my husband as he does not give a helping hand in managing the household chores” a higher percentage of non-working women agree (12.9%) and strongly agree (27.1%) while a small number of working women agree (4.3%) and strongly agree (2.1%) in the same statement. Similarly, in the second statement, “I always feel stress and quarrel with my husband as he does not help me much in taking of our children” majority of non-working women agree (58.6%) and strongly agree (4.3%). On the other hand, majority of working women believe that their husbands help them in taking care of their children as only few working women agree (4.3%) agree and strongly agree (4.3%). However, a similar trend is noticed in the third statement, majority of non-working women agree (60%) and strongly agree (33.1%) that they always quarrel with their husband due to unbalanced task division in domestic chores. Only few working women agree and strongly agree in the same statement.

The results also show that husbands’ lack of cooperation does not has much influence on working women stress that work family conflict few respondents agree and strongly agree on the statements that they do not get co-operation from their husband in managing the household chores and in taking care of their children. On the other hand, most of the non-working women are not getting co-operation from their husbands in sharing household works and taking care of their children. They believe that most of the husbands do not help them in doing household chores. Conversely, majority of working mothers expressed opposite opinion. Only few respondents from this group expressed that they are getting co-operation from their husbands on the same aspects. In the previous studies, it has been argued that husbands’ non-traditional attitude (not helping attitudes) would reduce mother’s challenges in their household.

These results contribute to show that husbands’ traditional ideology influence on non-working mothers’ challenges in their family (Richter, 1992; Steinhoff & Tanaka, 1993). Although working mothers are not facing much stress in getting co-operation from their husbands, they are having stress related to heavy workload and time constraints that might lead to work family conflict. In the last two statements, it was found that most of working women are having stress due to heavy work and time pressure. Most of them expressed that they always quarrel with their husband as they have work schedule and unfinished work. These come from stresses, which turn, into work family conflict among them. This might be one of the reasons that most of employees in Malaysia work for long hours.
Table 2: Stress and Work Family Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>WORKING MOTHER N=70</th>
<th>NON-WORKING MOTHER N=70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I always feel stress and quarrel with my husband as he does not give a helping hand in managing the household chores</td>
<td>31.4 52.9 10.0 4.3 2.1 70 100</td>
<td>58.6 2.1 0 12.9 27.1 70 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always feel stress and quarrel with my husband as he does not help me much in taking of our children.</td>
<td>34.3 44.6 12 4.3 4.3 70 100</td>
<td>14.8 20.0 2.1 58.6 4.3 70 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always feel stress and quarrel with my husband due to unbalance task division in domestic chores between me and him</td>
<td>27.1 47.6 15 3.4 7.1 70 100</td>
<td>2.9 0 4.3 60.0 33.1 70 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always feel stress and quarrel with my husband as I have heavy workload and many unfinished works.</td>
<td>18.6 2.9 22.1 13.4 44.1 70 100</td>
<td>50 27.1 5.7 11.4 5.7 70 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time pressure in balancing work and family needs is the main reason caused stress and family conflict among us.</td>
<td>18.6 35.7 0 23.4 22.1 70 100</td>
<td>58.6 28.6 4.3 7.6 0 70 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working Mother [Red]
Non-Working Mother [Green]

Because of the economic need of the family, some of working mothers are involved in part-time job beside their fulltime employment. Thus, most of working women are overloaded and not able to complete their work on time.

Steps followed by working women in balancing between work and family:

Although working women are facing stress and work family conflict in managing work and family, they are following some steps that assist them to cope with the problems faced. During interview, the professional counselor asked respondents whether they follow any steps in balancing family and work. A total of 32.9% respondents are managing family and professional duties with the assistance of professional counselor. The mean and std. deviation for this statement are 1.69 and .468 respectively.

Table 3: Steps Followed by Working Mothers in Balancing Work and Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>WORKING MOTHER</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Steps in managing family and professional duties by the professional counselor:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22 32.9 1.69 .468</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>48 67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing value</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Step in balancing work and family affairs by own:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, a large number of respondents (90%) follow the steps on their own. The mean and STD for this statement are 1.10 and 0.302 respectively. Steps followed by working women in balancing both work and family affairs include discipline, hardworking, punctuality, and understanding among family members. The results show that highest numbers of respondents (34.4 percent) follow discipline as the effective step in balancing both work and family affairs.

**Conclusion:**

The article examined stress among working and non-working women in balancing work and in family. The results showed that working women's stress are higher than non-working women. Majority of working women are in stressed because of their incapability to make personal relation, limited social visit and not having quality time for children and family. The article also examined factors and the influence of stress that might contribute to work family conflict. Most of working women are having stress related to heavy workload and time constraints that might lead to work family conflict. In the last two statements, it was found that most of working women are having stress due to heavy work and time pressure. Most of them expressed that they always quarrel with their husband as they have work schedule and unfinished work. These come from stresses, which turn, into work family conflict among them. Although working mothers are having extreme difficulties and to juggle their jobs and their home life, they made the arrangement among family members to follow discipline that help them to manage family as well as job responsibility.

**References**


